A

COMPANION

FOR THE

ALTAR.

Extracted from THOMAS à KEMPIS.

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A COMPANION FOR THE ALTAR.

An EXHORTATION *unto the* HOLY COMMUNION.

The Voice of CHRIST.

COME *unto Me, all ye that travel and are heavy laden, and I will refreſh you.*

The Bread, which I give, is my Fleſh, which I give for the Life of the World.

Take, eat, This is my Body which is given for you: do this in Remembrance of Me.

He that eateth my Fleſh, and drinketh my Blood, dwelleth in Me and I in him.

The Words which I ſpeak unto you are Spirit and Life.

CHAP. I.

With how great Reverence CHRIST ought to be received.

The Voice of the DISCIPLE:

THESE are thy Words, O CHRIST, the everlaſting Truth.

Becauſe therefore they are thine and true, they are all thankfully and faithfully to be received by me.

They are Thine, and Thou haſt ſpoken them; and they are mine alſo, becauſe Thou haſt ſpoken them for my Salvation.

I willingly receive them from thy Mouth, that they may be the deeper imprinted in my Heart.

Theſe ſo gracious Words, ſo full of Sweetneſs and Love encourage me; but my own Offences drive me back from receiving ſo great Myſteries.

2. Thou commandeſt me to come confidently unto Thee, if I will have Part with Thee; to receive the Food of Immortality, if I deſire to obtain everlaſting Glory.

Come, ſayeſt Thou, unto Me, *all ye that travel and are heavy laden, and I will refreſh you.*

O ſweet and friendly Word in the Ear of Sinners, that Thou, my LORD GOD, ſhouldſt invite the Poor and Needy to the partaking of Thy moſt holy Body!

But who am I, LORD, that I ſhould preſume to approach unto Thee?

Behold the Heaven of Heavens cannot contain Thee, and thou ſayeſt, *Come ye* ALL *unto Me.*

3. What meaneth this ſo gracious Condeſcenſion, this ſo friendly Invitation?

How ſhall I dare to come, that know no Good in myſelf?

How ſhall I bring Thee into my Houſe, that have ſo often offended thy moſt gracious Countenance?

The Angels and Archangels revere Thee; the Saints and juſt Men fear Thee; and Thou ſayeſt, *Come ye all unto Me!*

Unleſs Thou, O LORD, didſt ſay it, who would believe it to be true?

And unleſs Thou didſt command it, who would dare to come unto Thee?

Behold *Noah* a juſt Man laboured a hundred Years in the making the Ark, that he might be ſaved with a few; and how can I in one Hour prepare myſelf to receive with Reverence the Maker of the World?

4. *Moſes* Thy great Servant, and Thy ſpecial Friend, made an Ark of incorruptible Wood, which alſo he covered with moſt pure Gold, to put the Tables of the Law therein; and I a corruptible Creature, how ſhall

I dare ſo lightly to receive the Maker of the Law, and the Giver of Life?

Solomon the wiſeſt of the Kings of *Iſrael*, beſtowed ſeven Years in building a magnificent Temple to the Praiſe of thy Name.

He celebrated the Feaſt of the Dedication thereof eight Days together: he offered a thouſand Peace-offerings, and he ſolemnly ſet the Ark in the Places prepared for it, with the Sound of the Trumpets, and Joy.

And I the moſt miſerable and pooreſt of Men, how ſhall I bring Thee into my Houſe, that can ſcarce ſpend one half Hour devoutly? Yea, would I could once ſpend near an half Hour in due Manner?

5. O my GOD, how much did they do out of an Endeavour to pleaſe Thee?

And alas, how little is that which I do! I am very ſeldom wholly recollected, very ſeldom free from Diſtraction.

And yet ſurely no unbecoming Thought ought to appear in the Preſence of thy Deity, nor any Creature find any Place in me, for I am not to harbour an Angel, but the LORD of Angels.

Why therefore am I not more inflam'd at thy venerable Preſence?

6. The moſt devout King *David* danced before the Ark of GOD with all his Might, calling to Mind the Benefits beſtowed in Times paſt upon his Fore-fathers.

He made Inſtruments of ſundry Kinds, he compoſed Pſalms, and appointed them to be ſung with Joy.

He alſo often ſung himſelf to the Harp, being inſpired with the HOLY GHOST.

He taught the People of *Iſrael* to bleſs GOD with their whole Heart, and with joint Voices every Day to bleſs and praiſe him.

If ſo great Devotion was then ſhewn, and there was ſuch celebrating of the divine Praiſe before the Ark of the Covenant; with what Reverence and Devotion ought I to receive the moſt precious Body and Blood of CHRIST?

7. O GOD, the inviſible Creator of the World, how wonderfully doſt Thou deal with us!

How ſweetly and graciouſly doſt Thou diſpoſe of all Things with thoſe, to whom Thou offereſt Thyſelf in this Holy Sacrament!

This exceedeth all Underſtanding! This ſtrongly draweth the Hearts of the Devout, and inflameth their Affections.

8. O the admirable and hidden Grace of this Sacrament, which ſuch as will be Slaves unto Sin, cannot experience!

In this Sacrament ſpiritual Grace is given, the Strength which was loſt is reſtored in the Soul, and the Beauty disfigured by Sin, returneth again.

This Grace is ſometimes ſo great, that not only the Mind, but the weak Body alſo, feeleth great Increaſe of Strength.

9. Our Coldneſs and Negligence is much to be bewailed, that we are not drawn with greater Affection to receive CHRIST, in whom all the Hope and Merit of thoſe that are ſaved conſiſts.

For He is our Sanctification and Redemption: He is the Comfort of us Travellers, and the everlaſting Enjoyment of Saints.

It is much therefore to be lamented, that many ſo little conſider this bleſſed Myſtery, which rejoiceth Heaven, and preſerveth the whole World.

O the Blindneſs and Hardneſs of Man's Heart, that doth not more deeply weigh ſo unſpeakable a Gift!

Thanks be unto Thee, gracious JESUS, the everlaſting Shepherd, that hath vouchſafed to refreſh us poor Exiles with Thy precious Body and Blood, and to invite us to the receiving of theſe Myſteries with the Words of Thy own Mouth, ſaying, *Come unto Me, all ye that travel and are heavy laden, and I will refreſh you.*

CHAP. II.

That the great Goodneſs and Love of GOD *is exhibited to Man in this Sacrament.*

The Voice of the DISCIPLE.

IN Confidence of thy Goodneſs, I come, O LORD, a ſick Man unto my SAVIOUR, hungry and thirſty to the

the Fountain of Life, needy to the King of Heaven, a Servant unto my LORD, a Creature to my Creator; diſconſolate to Thee my merciful Comforter.

But whence is this to me, that Thou vouchſafeſt to come unto me! who am I, that Thou ſhouldſt give Thyſelf unto me!

How dare a Sinner appear before Thee? And how is it that Thou doſt vouchſafe to come unto a Sinner?

Thou knoweſt Thy Servant, and ſeeſt that he hath no good Thing in him, for which Thou ſhouldeſt beſtow this Favour upon him

I confeſs therefore my Unworthineſs; I acknowledge Thy Goodneſs; I praiſe Thy Mercy, and give Thee Thanks for this Thy tranſcendent Love.

For Thou doſt this for Thine own Sake, not for any Merits of mine; that Thy Goodneſs may be better known unto me, Thy Love more abundantly ſhew'd, and Thy gracious Condeſcenſion the more eminently diſplayed.

Since therefore it is Thy Pleaſure, and Thou haſt commanded that it ſhould be ſo, this Thy Favour is alſo pleaſing to me, and may my Sins be no Hindrance.

2. O moſt gracious JESUS, how great Reverence and Thanks, together with perpetual Praiſe, are due unto Thee for the receiving of thy ſacred Body, whoſe Preciouſneſs no Man is able to expreſs!

But what ſhall I think of, now that I am to approach unto my LORD, whom I am not able duly to honour, and yet I deſire to receive Him with Devotion?

What is better, than to humble myſelf wholly before Thee, and to exalt Thy infinite Goodneſs over me?

I praiſe Thee, my GOD, and will exalt Thee for ever: I deſpiſe and ſubmit myſelf unto Thee, in a deep Senſe of my own Unworthineſs.

3. Behold Thou art the Holy of Holies, and I the vileſt of Sinners!

Behold Thou inclineſt unto me, who am not worthy ſo much as to look up unto Thee!

Behold Thou comeſt unto me, it is Thy Will to be with me, Thou inviteſt me to Thy Banquet.

Thou wilt give me the Food of Heaven, the Bread of Angels to eat, which is no other than Thyſelf, the living Bread,

Bread, that deſcended from Heaven, and giveth Life unto the World.

4. Behold from whence doth this Love proceed! what a gracious Condeſcenſion appeareth herein! how great Thanks and Praiſes are due unto Thee for theſe Benefits!

O how good waſt Thou, when Thou ordainedſt it! How ſweet and pleaſant the Banquet when Thou gaveſt Thyſelf to be our Food!

How wonderful is Thy Operation, O LORD, how mighty is Thy Power, how unſpeakable is Thy Truth!

For thou haſt ſaid the Word, and all Things were made; and this was done which Thou commandedſt.

5. A Thing of great Admiration, that Thou, my LORD GOD, ſhouldſt be exhibited unto us by the Elements of Bread and Wine.

Thou, who art the LORD of all Things, and ſtandeſt in need of none, haſt pleaſed to dwell in us by Means of this Thy Sacrament.

Preſerve my Heart and Body undefiled, that with a chearful and pure Conſcience I may always celebrate Thy Myſteries, and receive them to my everlaſting Health: which Thou haſt ordained for Thy Honour, and for a perpetual Memorial.

6 Rejoice, O my Soul, and give Thanks unto GOD for ſo excellent a Gift, ſo ſingular a Comfort left unto me in this Vale of Tears.

For as often as thou celebrateſt this Myſtery, and receiveſt the Body of CHRIST; ſo often art thou made Partaker of all the Merits of CHRIST.

For the Love of CHRIST is never extinguiſh'd, and the Greatneſs of his Propitiation is never exhauſted.

Therefore thou oughteſt always to weigh with attentive Conſideration this great Myſtery of thy Salvation.

So great, new, and joyful it ought to ſeem unto thee when thou comeſt to theſe holy Myſteries; as if the ſame Day CHRIST, firſt deſcending into the Womb of the Virgin, was become Man; or hanging on the Croſs, did ſuffer and die for the Salvation of Mankind.

CHAP.

CHAP. III.

That it is profitable to communicate often.

The Voice of the DISCIPLE.

BEhold, O LORD, I come unto Thee, that I may be comforted by Thy Gift, and delighted in Thy holy Banquet, which Thou, O GOD, haſt prepar'd in Thy Goodneſs for the Poor.

Behold in Thee is all that I can or ought to deſire: Thou art my Salvation, and my Redemption, my Hope, and my Strength, my Honour and my Glory.

Make joyful therefore this Day the Soul of Thy Servant, for I have lifted it up unto Thee, O LORD JESUS.

I deſire to receive Thee now with Devotion and Reverence. I long to bring Thee into my Houſe, that with *Zaccheus* I may be bleſſed by Thee, and numberd amongſt the Children of *Abraham*.

My Soul thirſteth to receive Thy Body and Blood, my Heart deſireth to be united with Thee.

2. Give me Thyſelf, and it ſufficeth: But without Thee, no Comfort is available.

I cannot be without Thee, nor live without Thy Viſitation:

And therefore I muſt often come unto Thee, and receive Thee for the Welfare of my Soul; leſt haply I faint by the Way, if I be depriv'd of the heavenly Food.

For ſo, moſt merciful JESUS, Thou once didſt ſay, preaching to the People, and curing ſundry Diſeaſes, I will not ſend them home faſting, leſt they faint by the Way.

Deal Thou therefore in like manner now with me, who haſt vouchſafed to leave Thyſelf in this Sacrament for the Comfort of the Faithful.

For Thou art the ſweet Refreſhment of the Soul; and he that eateth Thee worthily, ſhall be a Partaker of everlaſting Glory.

O the wonderful Condeſcenſion of Thy Mercy towards us, that Thou, O LORD GOD, the Creator and

Giver of Life to all Spirits, doſt vouchſafe to come unto a poor Soul, and with Thy whole Deity to repleniſh her Hunger!

O happy Mind and bleſſed Soul, that receives Thee, her LORD GOD, with devout Affection, and in receiving of Thee is filled with ſpiritual Joy!

O how great a LORD doth ſhe entertain! How beloved a Gueſt doth ſhe harbour! How pleaſant a Companion doth ſhe receive! How faithful a Friend doth ſhe take in! How lovely and glorious a Spouſe doth ſhe embrace!

She embraceth Him, who is to be loved above all that is beloved, and above all Things that may be deſired.

Let Heaven and Earth, and all the Hoſts of them be ſilent in Thy Preſence: For what Praiſe and Beauty ſoever they have, it is received from Thy Bounty, and cannot equal the Beauty of Thy Name, of whoſe Wiſdom there is no Number.

CHAP. IV.

That many Gifts are beſtowed upon them that communicate devoutly.

The Voice of the DISCIPLE.

MY LORD GOD, prevent Thy Servant with the Bleſſings of Thy Goodneſs, that I may approach devoutly to Thy glorious Sacrament.

Stir up my Heart unto Thee, and deliver me from a heavy Numbneſs of Mind.

Viſit me with Thy Salvation, that I may taſte in Spirit Thy Sweetneſs, which plentifully lyeth in this Sacrament, as in a Fountain.

Enlighten alſo my Eyes to behold ſo great a Myſtery, and ſtrengthen me to believe it with ſteady Faith.

For it is Thy Work, and not Man's Power, Thy ſacred Inſtitution, not Man's Invention.

For no Man is of himſelf able to comprehend theſe Things, which ſurpaſs the Underſtanding of Angels.

What

What therefore ſhall I unworthy Sinner, Duſt and Aſhes, be able to comprehend of ſo high and ſacred a Myſtery?

2. O Lord, in the Simplicity of my Heart, at Thy Commandment I come unto Thee with Hopes and Reverence, and do truly believe that Thou art preſent in this Sacrament.

Thy Will is, that I receive Thee, and that by Love I unite myſelf unto Thee.

Wherefore I implore Thy Mercy, and crave Thy ſpecial Grace, that I may wholly melt, and overflow with Love unto Thee; and hereafter never ſeek any Comfort out of Thee.

For this moſt high and worthy Sacrament is the Health of the Soul and Body, the Remedy of all ſpiritual Weakneſs; hereby my Vices are cured, my Paſſions bridled, Temptations overcome, Grace infuſed, Holineſs increaſed, Faith confirm'd, Hope ſtrengthened, and Love inflamed.

3. For Thou haſt beſtowed, and ſtill doth beſtow many Benefits in this Sacrament upon Thy Children; O my God, the Protector of my Soul, the Repairer of human Weakneſs, and the Giver of all inward Comfort.

Thou imparteſt unto them much Comfort againſt ſundry Tribulations:

Thou lifteſt them up from the Depth of their own Miſery, to hope in Thy Protection.

Who is there, that approaching humbly unto the Fountain of Sweetneſs, doth not carry away from thence at leaſt ſome little Sweetneſs?

Or who ſtanding by a great Fire, receiveth not ſome ſmall Heat thereby?

And thou art a Fountain always full and overflowing, a Fire ever burning and never decaying.

4. Wherefore if I cannot draw out of the full Fountain itſelf, nor drink my Fill; I will notwithſtanding ſet my Lips to the Mouth of this heavenly Conduit, that I may draw from thence at leaſt ſome ſmall Drop to refreſh my Thirſt; and not wholly be dried up.

And tho' I be not ſo inflamed as the Cherubim and Seraphim; notwithſtanding I will endeavour after ſome

ſmall

ſmall Spark of divine Fire, by humbly receiving of thi enlivening Sacrament.

And whatſoever is wanting in me, O merciful JESUS, do Thou graciouſly ſupply, who haſt vouchſafed to call ALL unto Thee, ſaying, *Come unto me, all ye that trave and are heavy laden, and I will refreſh you.*

5. I indeed labour in the Sweat of my Brow, I am vexed with Grief of Heart, I am burthen'd with Sin, I am troubled with Temptations, I am entangled with many evil Paſſions; and there is none to help me, non to deliver me, but Thou, O LORD, my SAVIOUR, t whom I commit myſelf, and all that is mine, that Tho mayeſt keep me to Life everlaſting.

CHAP. V.

Of the examining our Conſcience, and givin up ourſelves to GOD.

The Voice of the BELOVED.

ABOVE all Things, thou oughteſt to receive th Sacrament with great Humility of Heart, an lowly Reverence.

And, if thou haſt Time, confeſs unto GOD in th Secret of thine Heart all the Miſeries of thy diſordere Paſſions.

2. Lament and grieve, that thou art yet ſo carnal, worldly, ſo unmortified as to thy Paſſions.

So unwatchful over thy outward Senſes, ſo often e tangled with vain Imaginations;

So negligent and cold in Prayer, ſo undevout in cel brating, ſo dry in receiving;

So quickly diſtracted, ſo ſeldom wholly recollected

So ſuddenly moved to Anger, ſo apt to take Diſple ſure againſt another, and ſpeak Evil of others.

So prone to judge;

So often purpoſing much Good, and yet performi little.

3. The

3. Theſe and other thy Defects being confeſſed, with full Reſignation, and with thy whole Will, offer up thyſelf a perpetual Sacrifice to the Honour of my Name on the Altar of thy Heart, faithfully committing thy Body and Soul unto me;

That ſo thou mayſt receive profitably the Sacrament of my Body.

4. For a Man hath no other Oblation, than to offer up himſelf unto GOD in the Holy Communion.

And whenſoever he ſhall come to me for Pardon and Grace, as I live, ſays the LORD, who will not the Death of a Sinner, but rather that he be converted and live, I will not remember his Sins any more, but they ſhall be all forgiven him.

5. As I willingly offer'd up myſelf unto GOD my Father for thy Sins, my Hands being ſtretched forth on the Croſs, and my Body naked, ſo that nothing remained in me that was not wholly turned into a Sacrifice, for the appeaſing the Divine Majeſty.

So oughteſt thou alſo to offer up thyſelf willingly unto me every Day, as a pure and holy Oblation, with all thy Might and Affections, in as hearty a manner as thou canſt.

What do I require of thee more than that thou entirely reſign thyſelf unto me?

Whatſoever thou giveſt beſides thyſelf is of no Account in my Sight; for I ſeek not thy Gifts but thyſelf.

6. As it would not ſuffice thee to have all Things beſides me; ſo neither can it pleaſe me, whatſoever thou giveſt, if thou offer not thyſelf.

Offer up thyſelf unto me, and give thyſelf wholly for GOD, and thy Offering ſhall be accepted.

Behold I offered up myſelf wholly unto my Father for thee, that I might be wholly thine, and thou remain mine.

But if thou abideſt in thyſelf, and doſt not offer thyſelf up freely unto my Will, thy Oblation is not entire, neither will the Union between us be perfect.

Therefore a free offering up of thyſelf into the Hands of GOD ought to go before all thy Actions, if thou wilt obtain Freedom and Grace.

For this Cauſe ſo few become *inwardly* free, becauſe they cannot wholly deny themſelves.

My Saying is unalterable, *Unleſs a Man forſake all, he cannot be my Diſciple.*

Therefore, if thou deſireſt to be my Diſciple, offer up thyſelf unto me with thy whole Affections.

CHAP. VI.

That we ought to offer up ourſelves, and all that is ours, unto GOD, and to pray for all.

The Voice of the DISCIPLE.

THINE, O LORD, are all Things that are in Heaven and in Earth.

I deſire to offer up myſelf unto Thee, as a free Oblation, and to remain always Thine.

O LORD, in the Simplicity of my Heart I offer myſelf unto Thee this Day, for a Sacrifice of perpetual Praiſe, to be Thy Servant for ever.

2. I offer unto Thee, O LORD, all my Sins and Offences, which I have committed before Thee and Thy holy Angels, from the Day wherein I firſt could ſin, to this Hour, upon Thy merciful Altar.

Conſume and burn them all with the Fire of Thy Love, and waſh out all the Stains of my Sins.

O cleanſe my Conſcience from all Offences, and reſtore to me again Thy Grace, which I loſt by Sin, fully forgiving me all my Offences, and receiving me mercifully with a Kiſs of Peace.

3. What can I do for my Sins, but humbly confeſs and bewail them, and inceſſantly intreat Thy Favour?

I beſeech Thee hear me graciouſly, when I ſtand before Thee, O my GOD.

All my Sins are very diſpleaſing unto me. I will never commit them any more; but I bewail them, and am purpoſed to repent, and according to the utmoſt of my Power to pleaſe Thee.

Forgive me, O GOD, forgive me my Sins for Thy holy Name's Sake.

Save my Soul, which Thou haſt redeemed with Thy moſt precious Blood.

Behold, I commit myſelf to Thy Mercy, I reſign myſelf into Thy Hands.

Do with me according to Thy Goodneſs; not according to my Wickedneſs and Iniquity.

4. I offer up alſo unto Thee all whatſoever Good Thou haſt given me, altho' it be very little and imperfect, that Thou mayſt amend and ſanctify it.

That Thou mayſt make it grateful and acceptable unto Thee, and always perfect it more and more;

And bring me alſo, who am a ſlothful and unprofitable Creature, to a good and bleſſed End.

5. I offer up alſo unto Thee all the pious Deſires of devout Perſons, the Neceſſities of my Parents, Friends, Brethren, Siſters, and of all thoſe that are dear unto me, or that have done Good either to myſelf or to others for Thy Love.

And that have deſired me to pray for them and all theirs: That they all may receive the Help of Thy Grace and Comfort, Protection from Dangers, Deliverance from Pain; and being freed from all Evils, may joyfully give worthy Thanks unto Thee.

6. I offer up alſo unto Thee my Prayers, eſpecially for them who have in any thing wronged, or grieved, or ſlandered me, or have done me any Damage or Diſpleaſure;

And for all thoſe alſo, whom I have at any Time troubled, grieved, or ſcandalized by Words or Deeds, wittingly or at unawares; that it may pleaſe Thee to forgive us all our Sins and Offences, one againſt another.

Take, O Lord, from our Hearts, all Jealouſy, Indignation, Wrath, and Contention, and whatſoever may impair Charity, and leſſen brotherly Love.

Have Mercy, O LORD, have Mercy on thoſe that crave Thy Mercy: Give Grace unto them that ſtand in need thereof; and grant that we may be counted worthy to enjoy Thy Grace, and to attain to Life everlaſting. *Amen.*

CHAP. VII.

That the Body of CHRIST, *and the Holy Scripture, are moſt neceſſary unto a faithful Soul.*

The Voice of the DISCIPLE.

O LORD JESUS, how great Sweetneſs hath a Soul that feaſteth with Thee in Thy Banquet, where there is ſet no other Food but Thyſelf, her only Beloved, and moſt to be deſired above all the Deſires of her Heart!

And verily it would be a ſweet Thing unto me to pour out Tears from the very Bottom of my Heart in Thy Preſence: Aud with holy *Magdalene* to waſh Thy Feet with my Tears.

But where is this Devotion? Where is this ſo plentiful ſhedding of holy Tears?

Surely in the Sight of Thee and Thy holy Angels my whole Heart ſhould be inflamed, and even weep for Joy

For I enjoy Thee in the Sacrament truly preſent tho' hidden under another Repreſentation.

2. For to behold Thee in Thine own divine Brightneſs, mine Eyes would not be able to endure it.

Neither could the whole World ſtand in the Brightneſs of the Glory of Thy Majeſty.

I enjoy Him, whom the Angels adore in Heaven:

But I, as yet, by Faith; they by Sight, and without a Veil.

I ought to be content with the Light of true Faith, and to walk therein until the Day of everlaſting Brightneſs break forth, and the Shadows of Figures paſs away.

For when that which is perfect ſhall come, the Uſe of Sacraments ſhall ceaſe.

For the Bleſſed in Heaven need not any ſacramental Remedy, but rejoice without End in the Preſence of GOD.

Beholding his Glory Face to Face, and being tranſformed from Glory to Glory in the Image of the incomprehenſible Deity, they taſte the Word of GOD made Fleſh,

Fleſh, as He was from the Beginning, and as he remnaieth for ever.

3. Thou art my Witneſs, O God, that nothing can comfort me; no Creature can give me Reſt, but Thou, O God, whom I deſire to behold everlaſtingly.

But I ſubmit myſelf to Thee in all my Deſires.

For thy Saints alſo, O Lord, who now rejoice with Thee, whilſt they lived, expected in Faith and great Patience the coming of Thy Glory. What they believed, I believe: What they hoped for, I alſo hope for: Whither they are come, I truſt I ſhall come by Thy Grace.

In the mean time I will go forward in Faith, ſtrengthened by their Examples:

I have alſo Thy holy Book for my Comfort and Guide, and Thy moſt holy Body for a Remedy and Refuge.

4. I perceive two Things to be eſpecially neceſſary in this Life, without which it would be inſupportable.

Whilſt I am kept in the Priſon of this Body, I chiefly need two Things, to wit, Food and Light.

Thou haſt therefore given unto me Thy ſacred Body and Blood for the Nouriſhment of my Soul; and Thou haſt ſet Thy Word as a Light unto my Feet.

Without theſe Two I could not well live.

For the Word of God is the Light of the Soul, and Thy Sacrament the Bread of Life.

Thanks be unto Thee, O Jesus Christ, the Light of everlaſting Life, for the holy Doctrine which Thou haſt afforded us by Thy Servants, the Prophets and Apoſtles.

5. Thanks be unto Thee, O Thou Creator and Redeemer of Man, who, to manifeſt Thy Love to the whole World, has prepared a great Supper, wherein Thou haſt ſet before us to be eaten, Thy moſt ſacred Body and Blood.

Rejoicing all the Faithful with Thy holy Banquet, and repleniſhing them with the Cup of Salvation; and the holy Angels do feaſt with us, but yet with a more happy Sweetneſs.

O how great and honourable is the Office of God's Miniſters, to whom it is given with ſacred Words to conſecrate the Sacrament to the Lord of Glory, with

their Lips to bleſs, with their Hands to hold, with thei Mouth to receive, and alſo to adminiſter it to others.

Nothing but what is holy, no Word but good and profitable, ought to proceed from his Mouth, who ſo often receiveth the Sacrament of CHRIST.

7. Aſſiſt, Almighty GOD, with Thy Grace, that they who have undertaken the Office of Prieſthood, may ſerve Thee worthily and devoutly in all Purity.

And, if they have not lived in ſo great Innocency as they ought, grant them at leaſt duly to bewail their Sins which they have committed; and in the Spirit of Humility, and with full Purpoſe of Heart, to ſerve Thee hereafter more fervently.

CHAP. VIII.

How he, who is to communicate, ought to prepare himſelf.

The Voice of the BELOVED.

I AM the Lover of Purity, and the Giver of all Holineſs.

I ſeek a pure Heart, and there is the Place of my Reſt.

Make ready and adorn for me the great Chamber, and I will keep with thee the Paſſover among my Diſciples.

2. Know thou notwithſtanding, that the Merit of no Action of thine is able to make this Preparation, altho' thou ſhouldſt prepare thyſelf a whole Year together, and think of nothing elſe.

Thou art of my mere Grace and Favour ſuffered to come to my Table.

Like a Beggar invited to Dinner to a rich Man, who hath nothing elſe to return him for his Benefits, but humble himſelf, and give him Thanks.

Do what lieth in thee, and do it diligently, not for Cuſtom, not for Neceſſity, but with Fear and Reverence, and Affection, receive thy beloved LORD GOD, who vouchſafeth to come unto thee.

I am He, that hath called thee, I have commanded it to be done, I will ſupply what is wanting in thee: Come, and receive Me.

3. When I beſtow the Grace of Devotion, give Thanks to Thy God; for it is given thee, not for that thou art worthy, but becauſe I have Mercy on thee.

If thou haſt it not, but doſt feel thyſelf dry; continue in Prayer, ſigh and knock, and give not over until thou receive ſome Drop of ſaving Grace.

Thou haſt Need of Me, not I of thee.

Neither comeſt thou to ſanctify Me, but I come to ſanctify and improve thee.

Thou comeſt that thou mayeſt be ſanctified by Me, and united unto Me, that thou mayeſt receive new Grace, and be inflamed anew to Amendment.

CHAP. IX.

That we ought to deſire with our whole Heart, to be united unto CHRIST *in the Sacrament.*

The Voice of the Diſciple.

WHO will give me, O Lord, to find Thee alone, and to open my whole Heart unto Thee, and enjoy Thee as my Soul deſireth?

And that no Creature may move or regard me, but Thou alone mayſt ſpeak unto me, and I unto Thee, as the Beloved is wont to ſpeak to his Beloved, and a Friend to banquet with a Friend.

This I pray for, this I deſire, that I may be wholly united unto Thee, and may withdraw my Heart from all created Things.

That I may, by often communicating, learn more and more to reliſh heavenly and eternal Things.

Ah, Lord God, when ſhall I be wholly united to Thee, and ſwallowed up in Thee, and altogether forgetful of myſelf?

Thou in me, and I in Thee, and ſo grant Us both to continue in one.

2. Verily, Thou art my Beloved, the choiceſt among Thouſands, in whom my Soul is well pleaſed to dwell all the Days of her Life.

Verily, Thou art my Peace-maker, in whom is great Peace and true Reſt, without whom is Labour and Sorrow, and infinite Miſery.

Verily,

Verily, thou art a GOD that hideſt Thyſelf, and Thy Counſel is not with the Wicked, but thy Speech is with the Humble and Simple of Heart.

O LORD, how good is thy Spirit, who to ſhew Thy Sweetneſs towards Thy Children, vouchſafeſt to feed them with the Bread of Heaven!

Verily, there is no other Nation ſo great, that hath GOD ſo nigh unto them, as Thou our GOD art to all Thy faithful Ones.

Unto whom, for the raiſing up their Hearts to Heaven, Thou giveſt Thyſelf to be eaten and enjoy'd.

3. For what other Nation is there ſo honoured as the Chriſtian People?

Or what Creature under Heaven ſo beloved, as the believing Soul, whom GOD Himſelf feedeth with his glorious Fleſh?

O unſpeakable Grace! O admirable Condeſcenſion! O infinite Love ſingularly beſtowed upon Man!

But what ſhall I give unto the LORD in Return of His Grace, for ſo eminent an Expreſſion of Love?

There is nothing more acceptable than to give my Heart wholly to my GOD, and to unite it cloſely unto Him.

Then ſhall my inward Parts rejoice, when my Soul ſhall be perfectly united unto GOD.

Then he will ſay unto me: If thou wilt be with Me, I will be with thee.

And I will anſwer Him: Vouchſafe, O LORD, to remain with me, and I will gladly be with Thee.

This is my whole Deſire, that my Heart be united unto Thee.

4. O how great is Thy Goodneſs, O LORD, which Thou has laid up for them that fear Thee!

When I remember ſome who come with the greateſt Devotion and Affection, I am confounded, and bluſh within myſelf, that I come ſo heavily and coldly to Thy Table.

That I remain ſo dry and without hearty Affection, that I am not inflamed in thy Preſence! while others, out of vehement Deſire, and feeling Affection of Heart, cannot contain themſelves from weeping.

With Deſire both of Soul and Body, they earneſtly longed after Thee, O GOD, the living Fountain.

Be merciful unto me, good JESUS, ſweet and gracious LORD, and grant me, Thy poor needy Creature, to feel ſometimes at leaſt, in this holy Communion, ſomewhat of thy tender cordial Affection.

That my Faith may be more ſtrengthened, my Hope in thy Goodneſs increaſed, and that my Love once perfectly inflamed, after the taſting of the heavenly Manna, may never decay.

5. Thy Mercy, O LORD, is able to give me the Grace I deſire, and to viſit me with the Spirit of Fervour when it ſhall pleaſe Thee.

For tho' I burn not with ſo great Deſire as thoſe: Yet by Thy Grace I pant for this inflamed Deſire.

Praying and craving that I may partake with all ſuch thy fervent Lovers, and be numbred among them.

CHAP. X.

How the Grace of Devotion is obtained.

The Voice of the BELOVED.

THOU oughteſt to ſeek the Grace of Devotion fervently, to ask it earneſtly, to expect it patiently and with Confidence, to receive it gratefully, to keep it humbly, to work with it diligently, and to commit the Time and Manner of this heavenly Viſitation to GOD, until it pleaſe Him to come unto thee.

Thou oughteſt to humble thyſelf, when thou feeleſt little or no Devotion; and yet not to be too much dejected, nor to grieve inordinately.

GOD often giveth in a Moment, that which he hath a long Time denied.

He giveth ſometimes in the End, that which in the Beginning of Prayer he deferred to grant.

It is ſometimes a little Thing that hindereth and hideth Grace from us.

If it may be called little, that hindreth ſo great Good.

But if thou remove this, be it great or ſmall, thou ſhalt have thy Deſire.

2. For as ſoon as ever thou haſt delivered thyſelf to GOD, with thy whole Heart, and ſeekeſt not this or that, for thine own Pleaſure or Will, but fixeſt thyſelf wholly upon Him, thou ſhalt find thyſelf at Peace.

For

For nothing will then pleaſe thee ſo much, as what pleaſes GOD.

3. Then ſhalt thou ſee, and be filled, and wonder, and thy Heart ſhall be enlarged within thee, becauſe the Hand of the LORD is with thee, and he hath put himſelf wholly into thy Hands for ever.

Behold, ſo ſhall the Man be bleſſed, that ſeeketh GOD with his whole Heart, and buſieth not his Soul in vain.

This Man obtaineth a high Degree of divine Love, in receiving the holy Euchariſt.

Becauſe he reſpecteth not his own Devotion and Comfort; but above all Devotion and Comfort, the Honour and Glory of GOD.

CHAP. XI.

That we ought to lay open our Neceſſities to CHRIST, *and crave his Grace.*

The Voice of the Diſciple.

O Moſt loving LORD, whom I now deſire to receive, Thou knoweſt my Infirmity, and the Neceſſity which I endure, with how many Evils I am oppreſſed, how often I am grieved, tempted, troubled and defiled.

I come unto Thee for Remedy, I crave of Thee Comfort and Succour.

I ſpeak to him that knoweth all Things, to whom all inward Parts are open, and who alone can perfectly comfort and help me.

Thou knoweſt what good Things I ſtand moſt in Need of, and how poor I am in Virtues.

2. Behold, I ſtand before Thee poor and naked, calling for Grace, and craving Mercy.

Refreſh Thy hungry Beggar, inflame my Coldneſs with the Fire of Thy Love; enlighten my Blindneſs with the Brightneſs of Thy Preſence.

Turn all earthly Things to me into Bitterneſs, all Things grievous into Patience, all created Things into Contempt and Oblivion.

Lift up my Heart to Thee in Heaven, and ſuffer me not to wander upon Earth.

Be

Be Thou only ſweet unto me from henceforth for evermore.

For Thou only art my Meat and my Drink, my Love and my Joy, my Sweetneſs and all my Good.

3. O that with Thy Preſence Thou wouldſt wholly inflame, burn, and transform me into Thyſelf!

That I might be made one Spirit with Thee, by the Meltings of ardent Love!

Suffer me not to go from Thee hungry and thirſty! but deal mercifully with me, as Thou haſt often dealt wonderfully with Thy Saints.

What Marvel is it, if I ſhould be wholly inflamed by Thee, and die to myſelf?

Since Thou art a Fire always burning and never decaying, Love purifying the Heart, and enlightening the Underſtanding.

CHAP. XII.

Of vehement Deſire to receive CHRIST.

The Voice of the Diſciple.

I Deſire to receive Thee, O LORD, with great Devotion and ardent Love, with the Affection and Fervour of my whole Heart, as many Saints and devout Perſons have deſired Thee, when they received Thy Sacrament, who were moſt pleaſing unto Thee in Holineſs of Life, and moſt fervent in Devotion.

O my GOD, my everlaſting Love, my whole Good, my never-ending Happineſs, I would gladly receive Thee with the moſt vehement Deſire, and moſt worthy Reverence, that any of thy Saints ever had, or could feel.

2. And altho' I be unworthy to have all thoſe Feelings of Devotion, yet I offer unto Thee the whole Affection of my Heart, as if I alone had all theſe inflamed Deſires:

Yea, and whatſoever an holy Mind can conceive and deſire, all this, with the greateſt Reverence and moſt inward Affection, I offer and preſent unto Thee.

I deſire to reſerve nothing to myſelf, but freely and moſt willingly to ſacrifice myſelf and all mine unto Thee.

My

My LORD GOD, my Creator and Redeemer: I deſire to receive Thee this Day with ſuch Affection, Reverence, Praiſe and Honour, with ſuch Gratitude, Worthineſs and Love, with ſuch Faith, Hope and Purity, as Thy moſt holy Mother, the Virgin *Mary*, received Thee, when ſhe humbly anſwered the Angel, Behold the Handmaid of the LORD, let it be done unto me according to Thy Word.

3. And as Thy bleſſed Forerunner, *John Baptiſt*, leaped for Joy, by Reaſon of the HOLY GHOST, whilſt he was yet ſhut up in his Mother's Womb;

And afterwards ſeeing JESUS walking amongſt Men, humbling Himſelf deeply, ſaid with devout Affection, The Friend of the Bridegroom that ſtandeth and heareth him, rejoiceth with Joy for the Voice of the Bridegroom; ſo I alſo will be inflamed with great and holy Deſires, and to offer myſelf up to Thee, with my whole Heart.

Wherefore I offer alſo and preſent unto Thee the Joys, fervent Affections and Illuminations of all devout Hearts, with all the Praiſes celebrated by all Creatures in Heaven and Earth, that by all Thou mayeſt be worthily praiſed and glorified for ever.

4. Receive, my LORD GOD, my Wiſhes and Deſires of giving Thee infinite Praiſe and immenſe Bleſſing, which, according to the Multitude of Thy unſpeakable Mercies, are moſt juſtly due unto Thee.

Theſe I yield Thee, and deſire to yield Thee every Day and Moment: I do intreat and invite all heavenly Minds, and all Thy devout Servants, to give Thanks and Praiſes together with me.

5. Let all People, Tribes and Tongues praiſe Thee, and magnify Thy holy Name, with the higheſt Joy and moſt fervent Devotion.

And let all, that reverently celebrate Thy moſt high Sacrament, find Grace and Mercy at Thy Hands, and pray humbly for me a ſinful Creature.

And when they ſhall have obtained their deſired Devotion and joyful Union, and depart from thy heavenly Table, well comforted, and marvellouſly refreſhed, let them vouchſafe to remember my poor Soul.

FINIS.